

SECTION 7

FOOD PANTRIES

FOOD PANTRY

Food pantries in Indiana operate in a variety of ways. Their hours vary widely, depending upon the level of need in the area where they are located and the resources available to the organization operating the pantry. Food pantries must be government agencies or non-profit organizations with 501(C)(3) tax-exempt status or be an affiliate of a church that has a 501(C)(3). The physical facility must be public, safe and appropriate for storing and distributing donated food. The pantry must meet ADA standards, See Section 11, Americans with Disabilities Act. Larger pantries may be open several hours a day, Monday through Sunday. Some pantries operate evenings and weekends to serve clients whose jobs prevent them from being served during the week. Small pantries, operating on limited budgets, may operate only one afternoon or one evening a week. The pantry must be open a minimum of 2 hours per month at this time. Hours could increase based on need in a particular area. The facility must, however, keep regular hours to be considered a pantry. If the pantry has not been in existence for 2 years it could be considered for approval by HCSS for an exemption under the Rural Initiative. If an outlet has problems maintaining volunteers, it might help changing the operating hours to evening and/or weekends. Also, it may benefit the outlet and the recipients if the outlet merged with one or more other pantries in their general area. This affords an outlet the opportunity to draw additional volunteers and resources from a larger base. The outlet would then be available to be open evenings, Saturdays, and hours during the week. If a pantry does not have hours convenient to clients who are working and/or make deliveries to homebound clients, they must use the Proxy Statement (Exhibit D) for these recipients.

If homebound deliveries are made the recipient must sign the Eligibility Certificate that the carrier will use when delivering the food. Homebound recipients must receive client choice. It is very important homebound individuals do not receive items that they will not use as that becomes a waste of the items. Please, refer to Section 10, Client Choice.

A pantry must be open to the general community in its designated geographic service area. The population served by a food pantry may not be restricted by factors other than signing the income eligibility certificate and stating the number of household members. Pantries cannot restrict an eligible client access to food for more than 30 days from the last date the client received food (preferably more often). The pantry must offer clients a choice of all products.

No religious service or teachings can be required in conjunction with receiving service

Pantry operational hours must be visible from the street.

All pantries must serve anyone that signs the Eligibility Certificate must receive assistance. If a recipient comes to a shelter that has a food pantry, serve this recipient once and then refer them to a pantry close to their residence.

No pantry receiving USDA food products can serve a particular clientele.

USDA FOOD PRODUCTS ARE SUPPLEMENTAL

Whatever its size, the food pantry must have the resources to provide clients with food orders by means other than government food products. USDA food products must be used as a supplement to these foods, not the singular food supply for the pantry. Other sources may include food received from food banks, privately donated food, food drives or food purchased with monetary donations. All food products should be included with like items. These items can be but are not limited to: paper products, diapers, cleaning supplies, laundry detergents, personal hygiene supplies, coffee, tea, fresh items such as fruits and vegetables, bread products, eggs, milk, dairy products, all other like items that are not received from USDA. These items can be the 50% match of USDA food products. The goal of each pantry should be to have well-balance choice of items for the recipient.

ELIGIBILITY DOCUMENTATION

The State of Indiana does only self-declaration as a means of documenting eligibility. No other documentation is needed to meet TEFAP requirements. Clients in need of USDA food products and non USDA items from a food pantry must sign the appropriate signature sheet to attest that they meet the Income Eligibility Guidelines. Income eligibility for TEFAP is at or below 150% of the annual federal poverty guidelines based on household size. The only other allowable factor of eligibility is residency in the State of Indiana (client state he has lived in Indiana at least one day). Signing the signature sheet places responsibility on the recipient and relieves volunteers of both legal and programmatic liability.

Name, number in family and address is all that is required. Asking for referrals, Social Security Numbers for recipient and family members, documentation of income, letters from employer(s) verifying employment, telephone numbers, cell phone numbers, utility bills, medical bills, or any other household information **will not be allowed**. If a pantry requires this information, they cannot receive USDA

food products, their Memorandum of Agreement will be cancelled immediately and all USDA food products will be removed from the pantry. Asking for Social Security Numbers is illegal.

Some areas in the state have “Help Lines” that give referrals for the sole purpose of tracking how many requests were made for food. There is no problem with this type of referral as there is no determination of need.

Migrant pantries that serve the migrant worker must be open to facilitate the migrant work schedule in order for them to receive the items from the pantry. The Eligibility Certificate (Exhibit C) is available in Spanish. Ask each migrant family if they have refrigeration or freezer capability before giving them product that requires this type of storage.

If the Migrant Pantry has not opened and migrants have arrived in your area serve them until the Migrant Pantry does open. They are eligible to obtain food from any pantry in Indiana. However, if there is a Migrant Pantry in the area and it is open, encourage the migrants to obtain their food from that pantry.

THE RURAL INITIATIVE

HCSS encourages the development of innovative designs to meet the emergency needs of residents of rural areas. Special operating procedures and the elimination of two-year existence may be approved to allow the effective provision of emergency food in sparsely populated areas. The outlet still must have set hours of operation and follow all the rules and regulations of this program. Once they have approval there is no difference in a Rural Initiative pantry than one that has been opened for two years. It is recommended and encouraged if possible that **new** pantries be on ground level or have an elevator.

Rural Area The RA must submit written rationale for each distribution site requesting exemption; this could include the elimination of the 501(C)(3). The exemption must be approved in writing by HCSS (this can be accomplished by Email). This exemption does not eliminate the need for refrigeration and freezing capabilities, nor the 50% match non-USDA products. They must follow all other criteria as set forth by TEFAP. American Second Harvest Food Banks will only establish food outlets that have a 501(C)(3).

FOOD PANTRY OUTREACH

Pantry must post their schedule of operation on the outside of the building. Outreach information can be, but is not limited to posters and pamphlets located in laundromats, churches, and grocery stores in the geographic service area of the outlet.